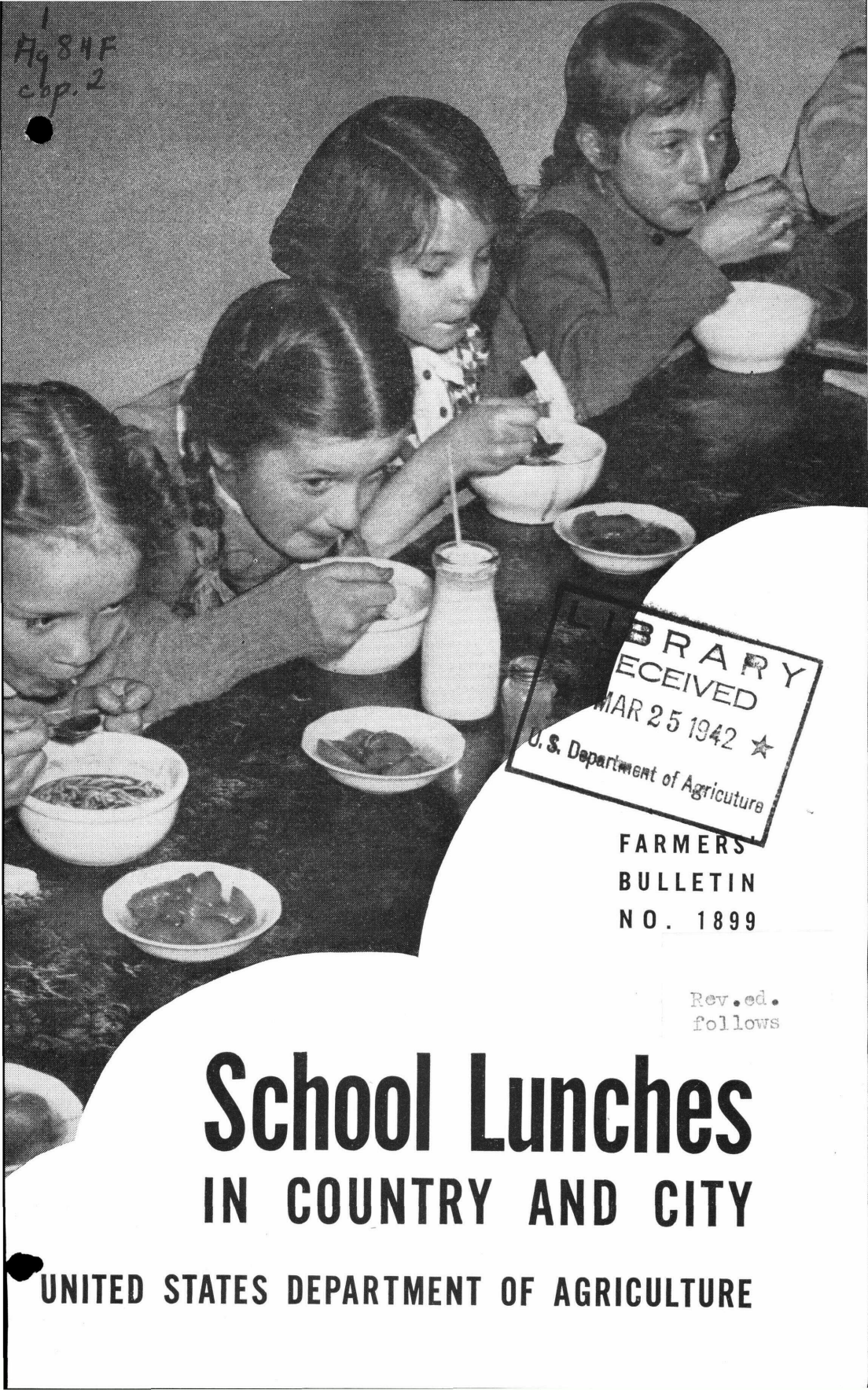


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School Lunches IN COUNTRY AND CITY

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

THREE GREAT GROUPS in our country have been in need—underpaid farmers, unemployed workers, and underfed children. The School Lunch Program aids all of these groups. It utilizes millions of dollars' worth of farm products that cannot be sold through the usual commercial channels without depressing farm prices. It gives work to thousands in preparing and serving lunches, and it feeds millions of children who would otherwise be undernourished.

School-lunch activities, conducted by many individuals and agencies, have been widespread and successful in this country, in Europe, and in South America, for a long time. The depression brought additional governmental agencies into the field and increased the adequacy of lunches served, the number of pupils receiving lunches, and the territory covered.

This newer aid carried the school-lunch work out into the remote country where undernourishment is too often prevalent and where facilities for school lunches are scarce. Now more country than city children are receiving school lunches. Yet malnutrition is still widespread in the United States.

This bulletin tells how the School Lunch Program works, how rural schools enter the program, and how they can get help to keep the lunches going. It shows that the background and basis of the school-lunch undertakings are usually somewhat similar in city, village, and country.

SCHOOL LUNCHES IN COUNTRY AND CITY

PREPARED IN THE BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS ¹

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DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORK

FOR THE FIRST TIME in the agelong struggle for livelihood, people can now produce enough of everything they need. This truth is of great significance to the world. More than any other one fact, this ability to produce abundantly has emphasized the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty. That condition is obvious now, but it is not new. For years, leaders in American life have interested themselves in finding ways of getting to those who need it the abundance that our farms and factories can produce.

Out of this interest have come the Government programs that seek to supply these ways. One is the Food Stamp Program. Another program is for the low-cost milk for schools. Still another is the direct purchase and distribution program, of which the School Lunch Program is a part. But none of these dramatizes more sharply the gap between those who produce and those who need than does the School Lunch Program.

Through this program, the needs of three major groups are being met in part. These groups are underpaid farmers, unemployed workers, and underfed children. This lunch program adds many bushels and barrels to the consumption of farm products, especially those of which there is a larger supply than can be sold through the usual commercial channels. It gives work, in preparing and serving the lunches, to many thousands who are otherwise unemployed. Lastly, through this program, millions of children in country and city in every State, and in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, receive the food without which they would be sadly undernourished.

Even before the indirect interest of farmers in the school-lunch work became evident, considerable progress had been made in this

¹ This bulletin was prepared by Caroline B. Sherman from an economic study by H. M. Southworth and M. I. Klayman.



FIGURE 1.—Hot work and large quantities do not baffle this energetic worker.

field. Here and there communities, parent-teacher associations, and other organizations had interested themselves in serving school

lunches. The Extension Service and the Bureau of Home Economics had often acted as advisors to such groups.

With the advent of economic depression at the turn of the last decade, efforts of the Government to meet this need expanded as the need itself grew. Pay rolls in cities fell, and purchases of food fell



FIGURE 2.—A man teacher, turned waitress at lunch time, seems to enjoy ladling out food to hungry children.

too. The produce of the farms began to pile up. On the one hand were hungry people; on the other were great stocks of the food they needed but could not buy. It was at this time that the Government undertook the programs that seek to bridge the gap between unused abundance and those in need. One of the first of these was the School Lunch Program.

The Works Progress Administration and the National Youth Administration became active in school-lunch work in many localities. Thousands of country and city children who had not been reached by the scattered earlier attempts now for the first time had a chance at the lunches. Most of the hot lunches served before the depression had been for children who could pay for them.

Children always have an appeal of their own, of course, no matter what may be their families' income. Small wonder then that all kinds of people are not only watching with keen interest the School Lunch Program for poorer children, but also in thousands of localities they are plunging into the hot and often hard work with energy and enthusiasm (figs. 1 and 2).

EXPERIENCE IN OTHER COUNTRIES

To many, it is a surprise to learn that the United States is far behind the pre-war activity of some European countries in feeding undernourished school children. In those countries, food was served in schools at an early date and usually there was early legal recognition of the need for the work. Generally, the work was on a country-wide basis. Both large and small countries in Latin America have also made notable progress in the work during the last 10 years.

IN ENGLAND

England got busy right after the Boer War, in the early 1900's, when one of its generals had announced that only two out of every five men who wanted to be soldiers were physically fit. The public was seriously concerned. Experts were appointed by Parliament to find out why, and to find out how to improve matters. After investigations, they reported that the difficulty lay chiefly in malnutrition among children and its aftereffects, and recommended a program of school feeding to wipe out existing malnutrition and reduce future defects. Victor Hugo, as early as 1865, had started this work in England by providing hot meals, at his home in Guernsey, for the pupils of the local school.

By 1905, about 100,000 school children were being given hot lunches in England under various auspices, yet the experts reported that at least in the larger cities undernourishment among children demanded greater correctives. In 1906, Parliament adopted a law which transferred school feeding from charities to local educational authorities and authorized them to install restaurants as part of the regular school equipment.

Later, England provided medical inspection in all schools. The medical officer often approves the meals and designates the children most in need of them. When investigation showed that many children lost during vacations the weight they had gained during the school term, schools were authorized to serve meals throughout the vacations. Next came milk at a special price of a half-penny for a third of a pint of milk for pupils. In some places breakfast and tea, as well as lunch, are served. Meanwhile, Wales has been serving meals or milk in most of its schools.

ON THE CONTINENT

France was among the countries that early provided for school lunches on a national scale. The beginning was colorful. In 1849 a battalion of the National Guard in Paris gave its treasury surplus to the city as a fund to aid poor children. This was the beginning of a fund to support school activities, including school canteens. By 1867, the other districts were doing similar work and a national law was passed authorizing the establishment of such funds throughout France. Feeding of pupils, often liberally, became a large business with needy pupils being certified for free lunches only after careful investigation.

Other European countries eventually were doing luncheon work similar to that in England and France. In Germany, Norway, and Sweden the activity was carried on mainly through municipal legislation. The first recorded school-lunch project was started in Germany in 1790, when Count Rumford established municipal soup kitchens in Munich which served poor children and unemployed grown people.

IN LATIN AMERICA

In Latin America, scattered private societies were busy in the work early in this century and the serving of food in schools reached a national scale in many of these lands during the 1920's. Today, free breakfast, lunch, and milk projects, supported in whole or in part by government funds, are found in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Venezuela, and Uruguay.

THE NEED IN THIS COUNTRY

This progress in other countries is in marked contrast to that in the United States. No one even knows with certainty how many children in this country are malnourished, but experts have abundant evidence that malnutrition, especially among children, is a serious problem. Nowadays the specialists talk in terms of malnutrition rather than undernourishment, for they have learned that defects in weight and height are only partial guides to the conditions to be corrected. Good nutrition is no longer a case of merely having enough foods—they must be chosen with regard to vitamins, minerals, and other substances each of which has a vital task to fill in building or protecting health.

In a Nation-wide dietary survey the Bureau of Home Economics found that nutritionists could rate the diets of only about one-fourth of our families as good. Far more than one-fourth of the diets would rate as fair, and far more than one-fourth were downright poor.

Naturally the situation was, and is, most acute among families with low incomes. But malnutrition is not limited to those who cannot afford to pay for good diets. Because they do not know the principles of nutrition, or are indifferent, malnutrition is found in many families that do not have thin pocketbooks. As the progressing knowledge of nutrition now shows, satisfactory growth and health demand that foods be selected with regard to what each item can do toward health. Good nutrition is dependent upon having the right kind of food in the right quantities.

Fortunately, our information on what makes a good balanced diet is getting better all the time. This country is now engaged in a vigorous campaign to make known to people generally these newer facts regarding vitamins, nutrients, and protective foods. Now, more than ever, there is urgent need for getting this information to even the most remote citizens as rapidly as practicable, for improved nutrition and improved health are fundamental in adequate national defense.

AGRICULTURE AND THE PROBLEM OF MALNUTRITION

Agriculture's interests are closely linked with the problem of malnutrition. Farmers can produce the food to prevent malnutrition and to aid in correcting it once it gets started. When the Nation's knowledge is more nearly complete, on just what food is needed to correct the Nation's nutritional deficiencies, great new demands will be made upon the farmers for their products.

Moreover, malnutrition is much more prevalent among farm families than is generally realized. The Nation is just as interested in correcting this handicap in the rural population as in correcting it in the congested cities, because a healthy farm population is one of the country's greatest safeguards.

A thousand people met for 3 days in Washington, D. C., in May 1941. They were summoned to the Capital of the Nation by the President to do a job. That job was to create, for the first time, a common platform upon which the Federal Government, and State and local governments, agriculture, industry, labor, and consumers can stand together "united for the fulfillment of definite objectives in nutrition."

"Total defense demands manpower," said the President. "The full energy of every American is necessary . . . Efficiency and stamina depend on proper food . . . Every man and woman in America must have nourishing food. . . ."

THE FARMERS AND THE SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM

The Department of Agriculture entered into the luncheon work when it undertook to distribute through the Surplus Marketing Administration surplus farm products in the interest of the public welfare, to aid farmers and the underprivileged alike. The S. M. A. buys up these foods when it has determined that there is a surplus over what people will and can buy at prices that give a fair return to farmers. These foods are shipped to the States for distribution to the schools that have free-lunch programs. Thus, some of this lunchroom work has resulted in extending the market for what the farmers have to sell, and other parts of the work promise further expansions.

ADEQUACY OF LUNCHES INCREASING

Luncheons differ considerably in different communities. In some schools only uncooked foods are served—apples or oranges, or milk. Elsewhere, cold food may be served except in winter, when one or more hot dishes are added. Other communities serve well-balanced lunches of adequate size and a few encourage second helpings of at least one dish for the children who want them (fig. 3). Frequently,



FIGURE 3.—Big boys in the making.

schools and communities that begin by serving only fruit or cold food are able to improve their programs until they are serving well-balanced meals.

The Department set up a procedure for its School Lunch Program by which any local organization that sponsors free lunches for school children can get, free of charge, some farm products. The quantities are portioned out in accordance with the number of children certified locally as needing free school lunches. The sponsors must abide by certain regulations and must agree that their regular purchases of food for the kinds of luncheons they were already giving will not be curtailed just because they are getting additional free food. No charge can be made for this free food but it may be used to supplement lunches for which the children are paying. (Lunches served for a profit cannot have these foods.) Lunch programs must be organized so that there is no discrimination between the children who pay and those who do not—we cannot have our children branded. Thus farmers not only do not lose any of their regular sales, but receive the benefits of the new business created by the school-lunch programs. Availability of foods through the Surplus Marketing Administration has been an effective spur to getting new programs started.

Lately, schools in many places have been trying to continue some luncheon-serving during the summer, at playgrounds, to keep the children who are on the nutritional borderline from slipping back into an undernourished state. Sometimes breakfasts or midmorning lunches are served to children who particularly need them. All of this seems to show that luncheon projects are coming to be enduring community institutions and permanent additions to the market for farm products.

COUNTRY CHILDREN PREDOMINATE

Surprisingly, more country than city school children are reached in the School Lunch Program. About 75 percent of all the schools and 60 percent of the children are found in rural communities. The largest participation is in the South, the Mountain States, and the States in the Western Plains. Most of the work is in the elementary schools. The quantity and variety of food supplied have increased decidedly as the program has expanded. More children have been fed and, on an average, more food has been given to each child.

ENTHUSIASM BRINGS RESULTS

Ingenuity and enthusiasm have played active parts in launching school lunchroom work in many places, and in keeping it going. Some isolated country schools use tents for kitchens and lunchrooms; some use chuck wagons. Sometimes a neighbor permits the school to use her kitchen (figs. 4 and 5). Rotating committees of mothers have always given invaluable service in all kinds of weather and under all kinds of conditions. The stories of some of these ventures, especially in rural places, the unexpected help and support they have received, and the satisfaction the sponsors, teachers, and pupils, have found in the results would make almost any school feel like starting on the job.

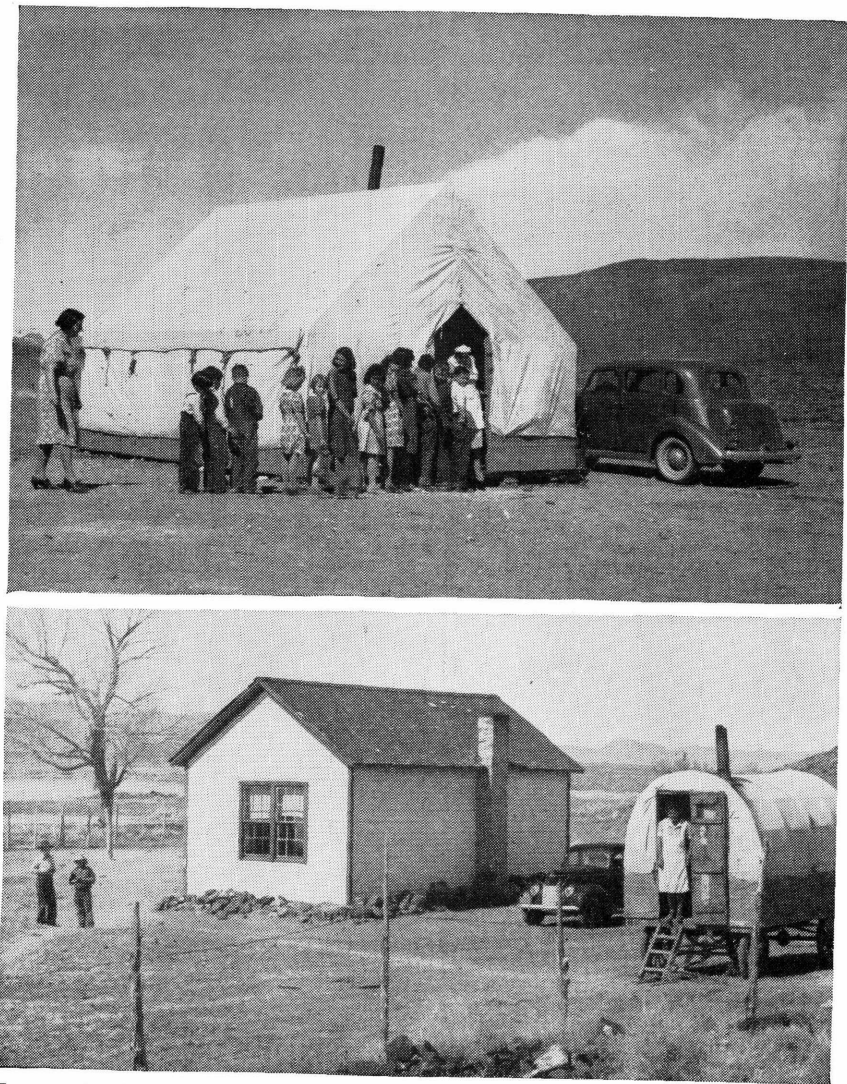


FIGURE 4.—In the remote country ingenuity has brought both tents and chuck wagons into use as kitchens and lunchrooms.

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

This is how the plan works. The welfare office of a State notifies the Surplus Marketing Administration of the Department of Agriculture as to the quantities of food needed for free luncheons. Different States ask for different proportional quantities, according to their conditions. The Department ships the foods to certain points in a State where the welfare authorities place them in central warehouses. From there, they are shipped as needed to country warehouses (fig. 6). They are sent later to the local schools or the schools may send to the

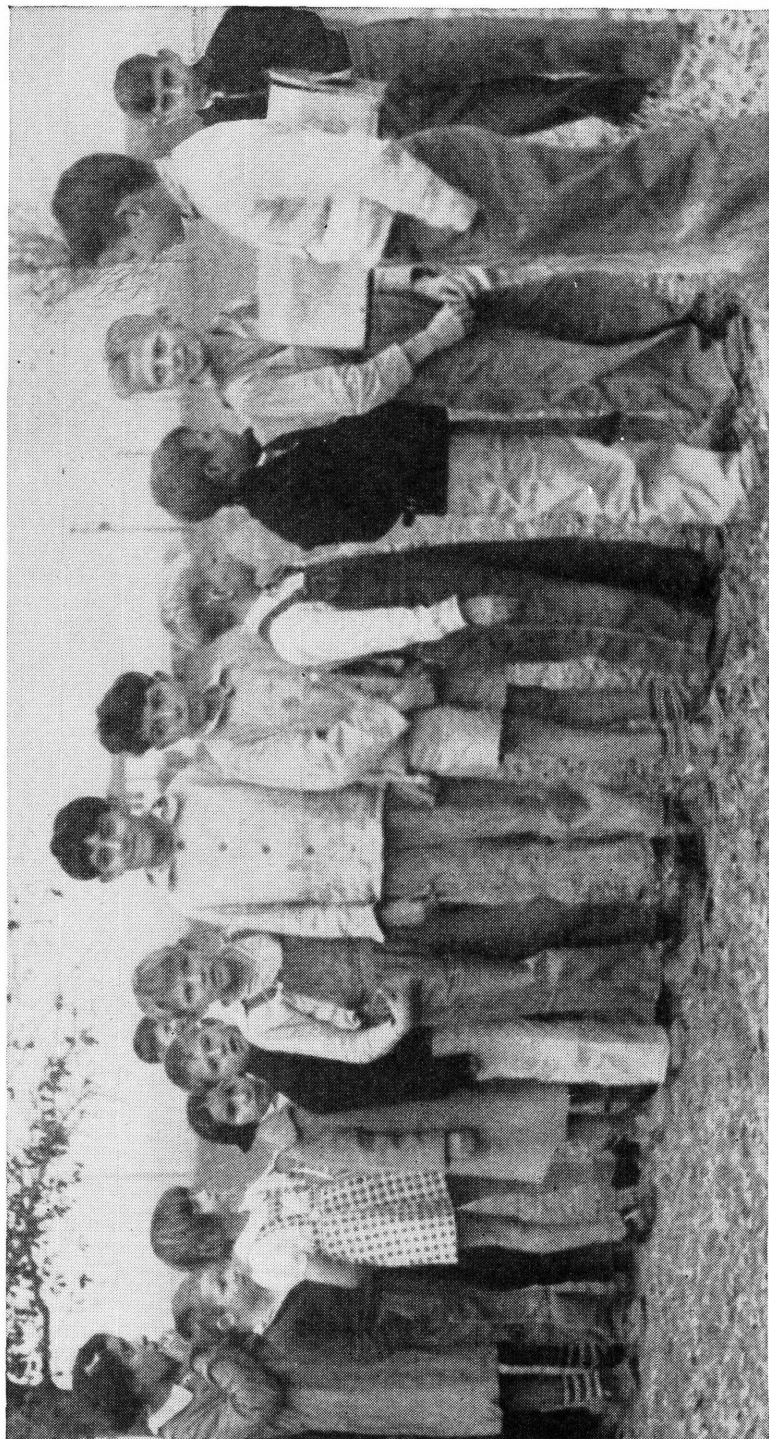


FIGURE 5.—A neighbor offered the country school the use of a kitchen. These children come across the road for lunch under the guidance of two of the older boys.

warehouses for the foods allotted to them. These methods of moving the products are simple, cheap, and quick. The Department requires that the warehouses be clean and well-managed, that refrigerated storage be used for butter and other perishables, and that wastage be prevented.

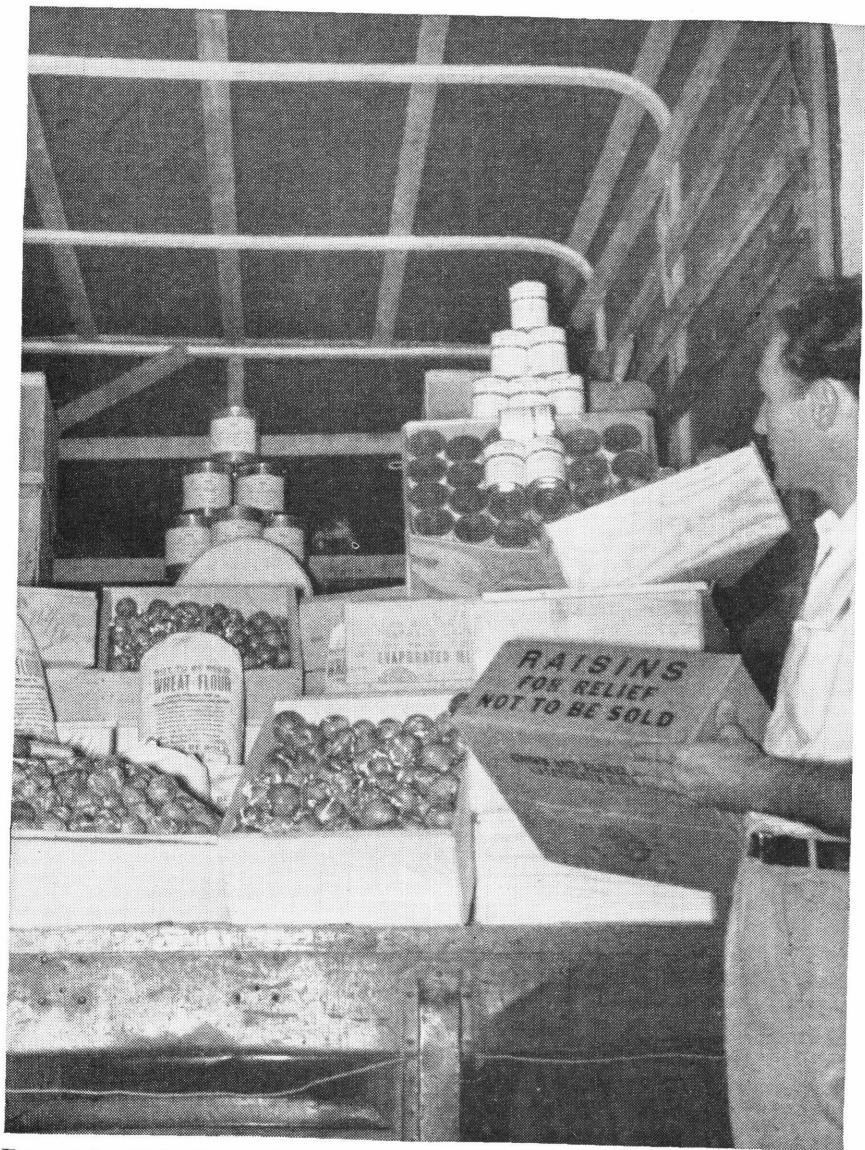


FIGURE 6.—Unloading a donation of food from the Surplus Marketing Administration at a county warehouse for later distribution to rural schools.

The list of the foods that have been supplied is a long one. It includes many kinds of fresh and canned fruits and vegetables, fruit juices, and several kinds of dried fruits. It includes evaporated and

dry milk, meat, fish in fresh, canned, frozen, and salted state, cereal foods, flour, lard, dried peas and beans, and butter and eggs.

These foods are not continuously available, of course. For instance, meat was chiefly available during the years of pasture drought when it was hard to sell all the meat that was being forced on the market. During later years dairy products and fresh fruits and vegetables have predominated. When the supplies of the Department are one-sided, so to speak, the local sponsors usually make their other purchases with a view to rounding out the lunches. Seasonal variations in the free foods are handicaps to the work, but many communities and schools supplement the distributed foods with their own gardens and by canning summer surpluses for winter luncheons. These are usually projects sponsored by W. P. A. but other groups do such canning, too.

SAFEGUARDS

Children who are certified to receive lunches free usually are certified because their families have very small incomes or because the children themselves are in unsatisfactory physical condition. In the former case, the teacher, principal, or other school authority who is familiar with the child's home conditions usually does the certifying. In the second case, the school nurse or other health official may declare a child to be in need of lunches on the basis of a physical examination (fig. 7). Children are usually certified individually but where the need is great, the whole school enrollment is sometimes certified as needing nourishment.

Differing systems are used to avoid making distinctions between pupils who pay for luncheon and those who do not. All schools are interested in avoiding discrimination among the children. A common system is for the teacher to give identical lunch tickets to those who pay and those who do not. Under this plan, children who pay do not do so in the lunchroom. In other schools, the parents who are able, make contributions to the sponsors of the project of money and food. Children who pay and those who do not sit side by side at the tables, with few knowing the difference.

HOW RURAL SCHOOLS START THE WORK

Lunch projects in small rural schools make up the largest part of the School Lunch Program. How do these schools get the work going? The prime mover is usually the teacher, who generally enlists the interest and help of the pupils' mothers. Often these mothers are the principal workers, day after day (fig. 8). But sometimes the work starts with the teacher and the 4-H Club or the local Future Farmers of America. In most instances, the teacher and helpers have been first stimulated by the county or home demonstration agent of the Extension Service, or the S. M. A. school-lunch representative, or the local Farm Security supervisor. Perhaps a visiting nurse or some other county or State health or educational officer has proposed the plan. Frequently, a similar project in a neighboring community has set the teacher and parents to thinking.

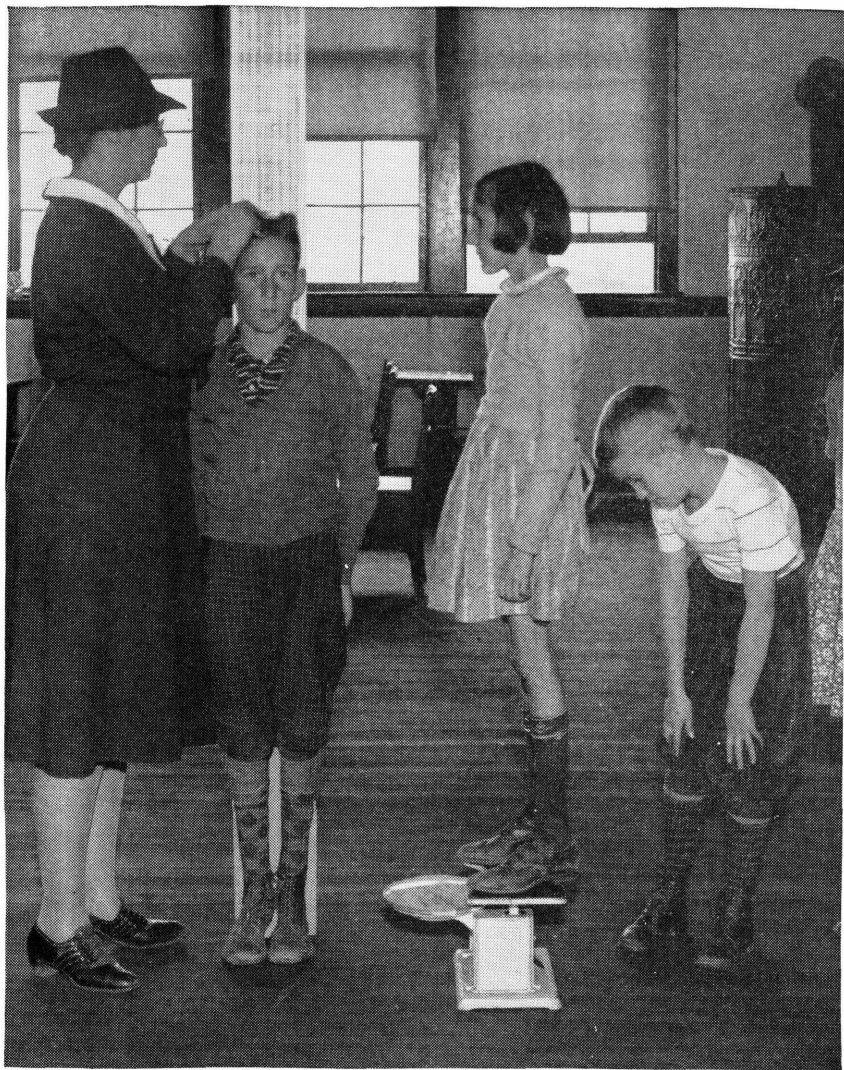


FIGURE 7.—One of the three county nurses of the Public Health Service examining pupils in a country schoolhouse before a lunch program is started. This county had the poorest school attendance of any in the State. Lunches were begun as part of the campaign for improvement.

Through such avenues, the suggestions reach the local school board. One of the first questions to be discussed with the school board is the provision of cooking facilities in the school. If this is possible (it isn't always, at least at first) arrangements are usually worked out for some of the mothers to take turns in preparing the lunch, or for the teachers with the help of a few of the older pupils to prepare it. At this point, help often can be had, advisory or otherwise, from such organizations as the State extension service, State department of education, State department of health, or State

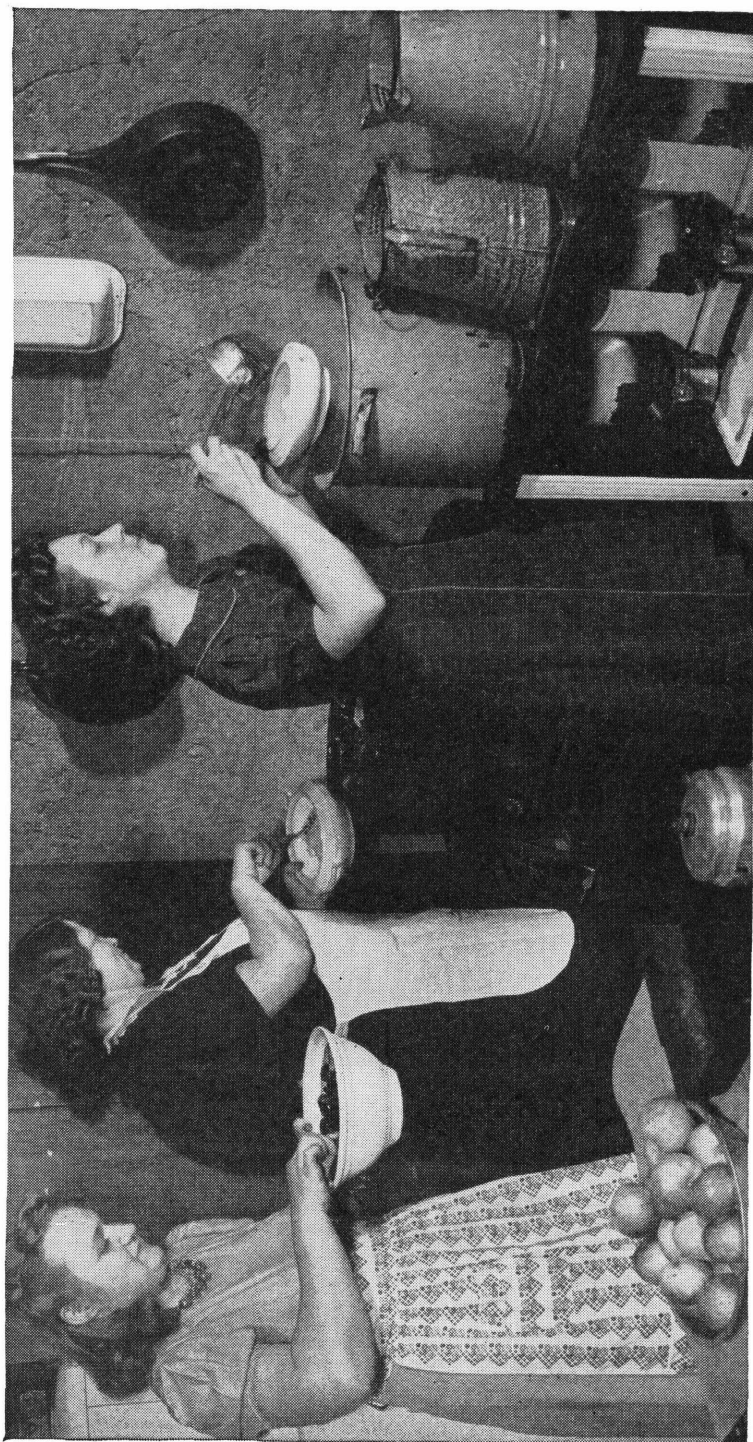


FIGURE 8.—These three mothers are preparing a hot luncheon at their children's school. Next week another team will take their place.

department of public welfare. If the school is easily reached from a nearby city or village it may be possible to obtain the daily assignment of a cook from the Work Projects Administration or a qualified out-of-school worker of the National Youth Administration. To meet such demands, the W. P. A. is experimenting successfully with the development of central kitchens to prepare food for delivery by motortruck to rural schools throughout wide areas. This work is increasing. Eventually, many rural schools may be within reach of these kitchens.

HOW TO APPLY FOR FREE FOODS

Usually, the next step is for the school health officer or nurse to visit the school and certify those who need the food. Application is then made at the local welfare office for some of the free commodities supplied by the Department of Agriculture. In some areas, the welfare agency can agree to deliver the allotment of food directly to the school, once or twice a month. Or the school may arrange for someone to call for the foods at the county warehouse or some other convenient point. Which commodities can be used to advantage and what additional food the sponsors will have to provide depend on the kind of lunch to be served.

At first it may be that the sponsors cook only one hot dish to add to the cold sandwiches the children have brought from home. Later these same sponsors may serve a lunch of hot stew, hot biscuits, stewed fruit, and cookies, of which the Department of Agriculture may have supplied the vegetables for the stew (the sponsors furnishing the meat), the flour for the biscuits, the butter to use on them, dried fruit for making the dessert, and oatmeal for the cookies.

This progress from modest beginnings encourages many a small school to make whatever beginning it can. In places where money is scarce the free lunch sometimes consists merely of an apple for each child, the teacher and mothers hoping and planning to serve more another year.

ROUNDING OUT THE LUNCHEONS

Money for the expenses—for buying food to supplement that provided by the Department and perhaps to get equipment—is raised in the many ways well known to country communities—bake sales, fairs, entertainments, subscriptions.

Even in the country, where distances sometimes are great, summer luncheons are being served in an increasing number of schools. In other rural communities groups of pupils, or mothers, or friends of the school, work diligently, during the summer, growing gardens that have been planned with school lunches especially in mind and canning foods donated from these gardens, or by neighbors, or by the Department, for use during the school term (figs. 9 and 10).



FIGURE 9.—Members of a 4-H Club cultivating garden products for school-lunch canning in a rural county.

HOW THE S. M. A. FIELD REPRESENTATIVE HELPS

Right here it might be well to explain in more detail what further part the Surplus Marketing Administration takes in the lunchroom work and how a rural community or school group can use its services. Its field workers, called school-lunch representatives, visit the communities that are interested. They explain the cooperation their organization can offer, describe the working of the projects elsewhere and tell about other places and people from whom information, advice, and aid can be obtained. Where a project is being organized they will take part in group discussions and meetings, and help on local problems. Where programs are already in operation, the local sponsors can call on S. M. A. representatives for help in improving methods of getting food from the local welfare office, in explaining any of the workings they do not understand, and in meeting other problems and difficulties. The representatives are always glad to get suggestions and stories of helpful experiences from sponsors of new or old projects to pass on to other communities.

These field representatives are active in helping to establish State-wide advisory committees in which the many interested agencies, whether official or private, combine their efforts in planning for, promoting, and improving the lunchroom work. These committees are active in most of the States. They can prevent overlapping of efforts and duties, divide the work advantageously, and fit it in with other education and child-welfare enterprises. In some States they give special attention to the work in remote rural sections.

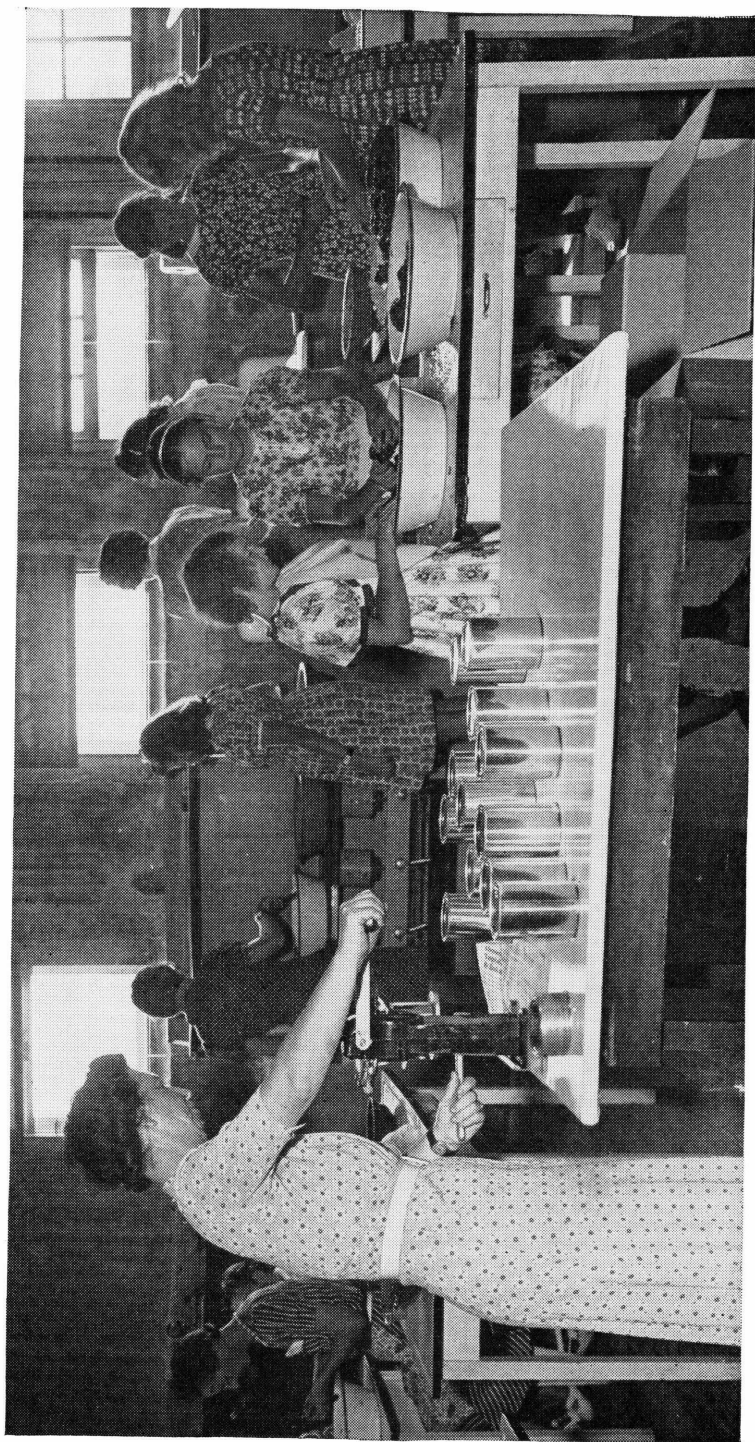


FIGURE 10.—To this rural school the 4-H Club and other friends bring vegetables that are then canned by parents, teachers, and older pupils, with the county home demonstration agent supervising the work.

AID FROM THE W. P. A.

The Work Projects Administration and S.M.A. have collaborated in the school-lunch work in so many effective ways that several should be specifically mentioned here. In all places where it has lunch projects, W. P. A. provides the labor for preparing and serving the food. When communities ask and workers are available it also supplies experienced training and supervision. It frequently takes the lead in gardening, canning, and other food-supplying projects and in a few instances, in particularly needy communities, W. P. A. has supplied funds to help pay for the food for the children. Even with the large-scale organization of this school-lunch work by W. P. A., the leaders have kept in remarkably close touch with its local phases.

In each State the W. P. A. share of the work is headed by a school-lunch supervisor responsible to the Director of the Community Service Division of the State W. P. A. There is a State staff of sectional, area, and local supervisors, selected for their special training and ability in lunchroom management and child feeding. This staff cooperates closely with the local sponsors, making sure that adequate standards of cleanliness and efficiency are maintained, and sometimes taking considerable responsibility for operating the local work. They may take entire charge of buying the additional food and of planning recipes and menus to get the best results.

The W. P. A. gives local workers special training for their jobs, sees that they comply with State and local regulations for food handlers, and insists upon a high standard in their lunchroom work. This has had an effect of improving this kind of work in hundreds of localities.

N. Y. A. DOES ITS PART

Working under adult supervision, thousands of young people employed by the National Youth Administration are giving valuable help in school-lunch work. They, too, have made it possible to serve lunches in schools that otherwise would have to do without. Their contribution is especially important in small communities where there are no certified cooks among W. P. A. workers. More than 16,000 young people in 42 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have earned needed money at the same time they were helping to serve lunches to needy children.

Young folks in the N. Y. A. projects also help in school-lunch garden projects. In some places they make tables, chairs, and other equipment for school lunchrooms—getting valuable experience and wages while supplying the pupils with attractive furniture made in their own community and by their friends (fig. 11).

MANY OTHER AGENCIES HELP

So many other agencies are helping in school-lunch work, in one way or another, that it is impracticable to explain the part they take. The list of governmental agencies alone is a long one (page 27). Each agency contributes a specialized part of the whole great undertaking.

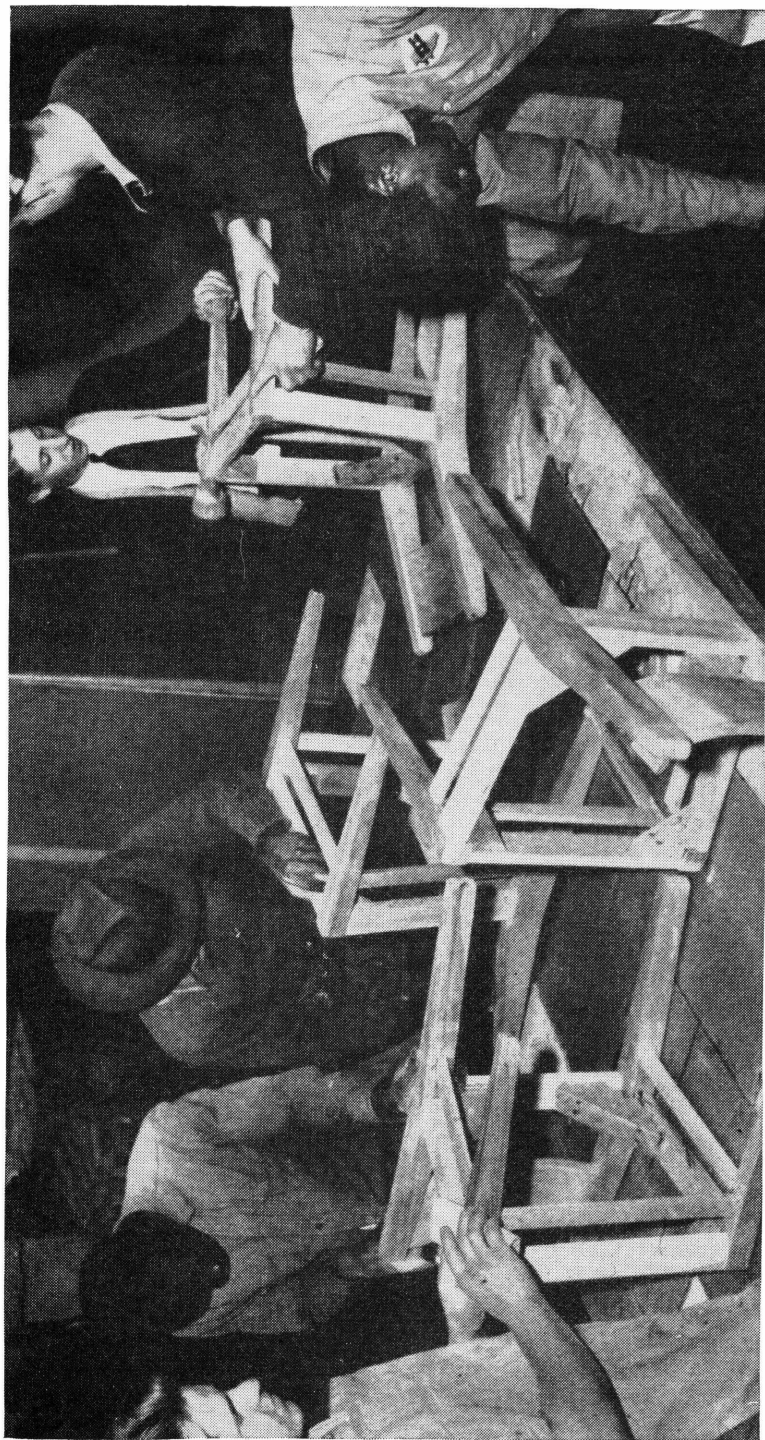


FIGURE 11.—These N. Y. A. boys are making chairs for a school lunchroom.

The School Lunch Program is constantly growing. The number of children who have lunches, especially in the country, is gaining all the time. More food and better balanced lunches are being served each child on an average as the months go by. Moreover, more schools are now serving lunches in lunchrooms and fewer in classrooms.

Of necessity, lunchrooms at the start are sometimes makeshift affairs, with the mothers doing the best they can; but some schools start the program with rooms that are attractive and well-equipped. Many lunchrooms are being improved as rapidly as the school boards or the friends of the schools can raise the money (fig. 12). Sometimes contributions are in the form of sewing or decorating bees;



FIGURE 12.—Organizers of a school-lunch program bring a new oil stove to a country school.

sometimes they are gifts of furniture that can be spared at home. In the art classes, colorful wall and window decorations may be made, or curtains and oilcloth mats—simple and practical things to make a cheerful lunchroom. The children are encouraged to bring flowers from the fields and gardens. Posters that drive home lessons in hygiene are among the effective decorations.

CONSOLIDATED AND VILLAGE SCHOOLS

Consolidated rural schools and village graded schools, as compared with others, have both advantages and disadvantages in lunchroom activities. Their work is heavier than that of other schools and the school community is less closely knit in its interests. Active responsibility is likely to be taken by the principal or other school official, or by the Parent-Teachers Association, or perhaps by a special committee of mothers organized for the purpose. Many of these schools already have equipped lunchrooms and kitchens but they are frequently not equal to the demands made upon them. Perhaps a village church or community center may allow its facilities to be used, although they may not be so near to the school as might be wished.

But these larger schools are more likely than others to have home economics departments that can supervise or aid and are more likely to have access to W. P. A. and N. Y. A. help. Larger schools more often have funds sufficient to support the undertaking, in whole or in part, but contributions are often necessary. Sometimes the more fortunate pupils who have to come long distances are willing and able to pay for their lunches, and the money so raised goes into a fund which, with the aid of the free foods, can be made to stretch over lunches to be served to the children who have been certified as needy.

City schools have their own problems and advantages, sometimes like and sometimes unlike those found in rural and village schools. The background and basis of their undertakings are usually similar to those of others. Hence, their special story is not attempted here.

OPENING NEW WAYS TO HEALTH

Along with school lunches in innumerable schools is associated a wide program of other activities. Emphasizing cleanliness and table manners and using health posters relating to food are among the beginnings.

LINKING THE WORK WITH THE HOMES

Many schools link the luncheons and the homes of the pupils in effective ways. Some invite the parents to consult about meals and diets and others hold nutrition classes for them. From some schools a visiting nurse or social worker visits the home of each certified child to advise regarding good expenditure of the family money for family food and regarding good methods of preparation, advantageous menus, and recipes. But communities that find it hard to do only a little do not allow this ideal of an expanding program of many parts to discourage a small beginning.

NURSERY SCHOOLS REACH VITAL AGE IN CHILDHOOD

The W. P. A. nursery schools make it possible to improve child nutrition at an age when the greatest good can be done, for it is at this age that malnutrition can do its worst. Good feeding in nursery schools can be both preventive and curative (fig. 13). Work is done with parents to help them improve nutrition and child care in their homes. A nursery school in Minnesota that is using commodities from the Department in its lunches reported that, in November 1939, the majority of the 30 children enrolled were shown by medical examination to be undernourished; in February 1941 a child specialist examined the 36 children then enrolled and found only one case of undernourishment. This child had only recently entered the school.

Under the expanded civilian defense programs in which the Department of Agriculture takes an active part as the provider of food, or in similar programs after the emergency, good nutrition at the most effective stage may come to be one of the most important reasons for maintaining these nursery schools.

LARGE PROJECTS AID SMALL SCHOOLS

One of the more extensive W. P. A. projects is its experimental work in running bakeries. In a few localities the schools have shipped all or part of their free allotments of flour, other cereal products, and fruit to a central town or county bakery where they are used in making bread, cakes, and cookies which are redistributed. This has proved a great help to schools that have no way of baking or that have inadequate baking facilities, for had this service not been available they would not have been eligible to receive the commodities involved from the Department. Experiments with central kitchens have been mentioned.

Sanitary conditions can be guarded in these large establishments and the products can be uniform. The more small schools can depend upon central bakeries and kitchens, the more rapidly the schools without equipment, and without funds to get it, can undertake lunch work.

INTEGRATION BROADENS RESULTS

If a school lunch is to be most effective, it must be integrated in the whole educational program of the school and in a broad general community program for child welfare. This may seem a far goal to many, but in general, the sooner it is recognized the better the progress toward it. Beginnings and progress are now evident in a multitude of localities.

SCHOOL MILK PROGRAMS

The new School Milk Program developed by the Department of Agriculture deserves a paragraph of its own. It is opening up an entirely new market, for many of the children being served are from families that buy practically no milk. Under this program, which is safeguarded by necessary rules, city welfare people in a few large cities can buy milk at a special low price and supply it to the needy children, or the children can buy the milk for a penny for a half-pint. This program is made possible by the cooperation of milk

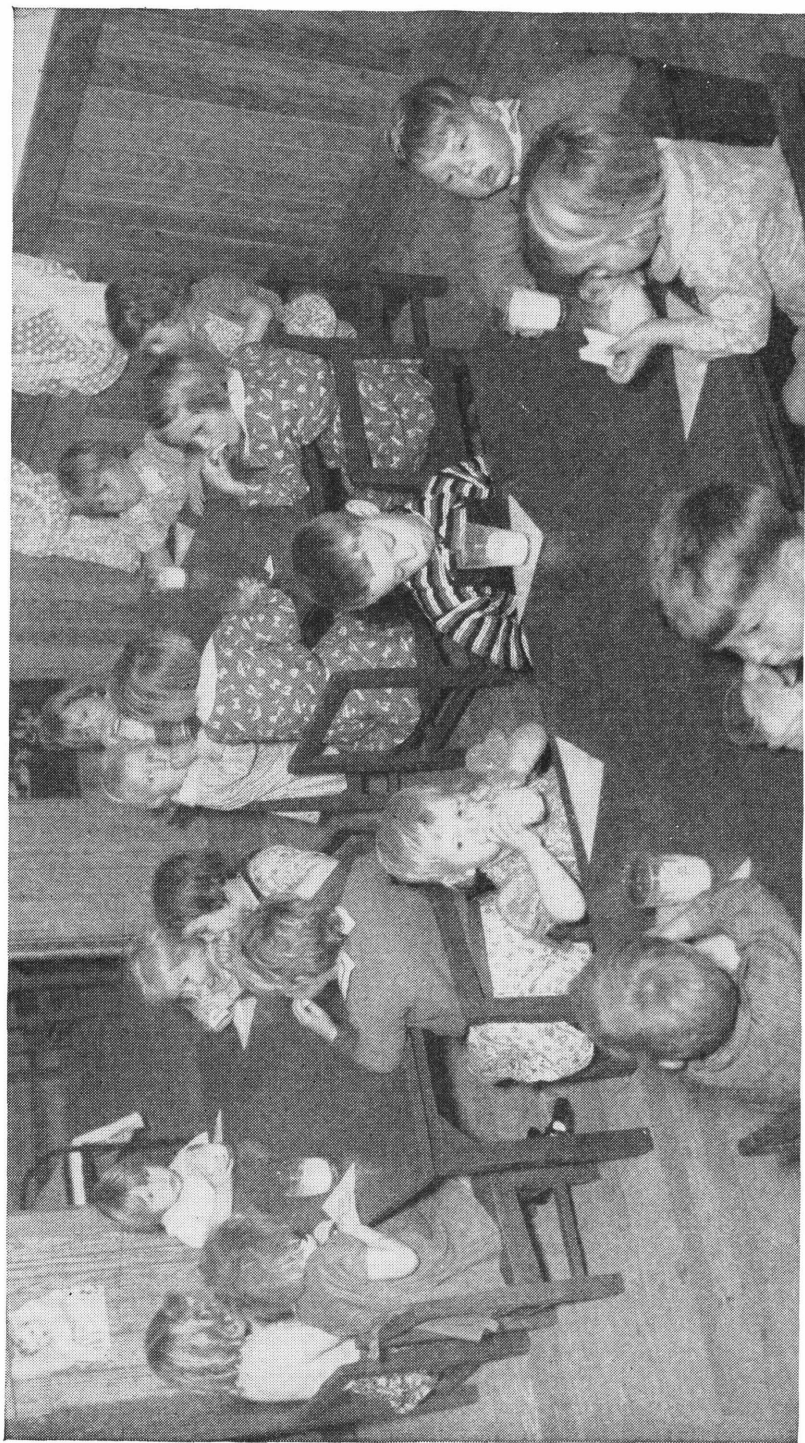


FIGURE 13.—In addition to the free lunch, many nursery schools serve milk in the midmorning in a special effort to do preventive as well as curative work.

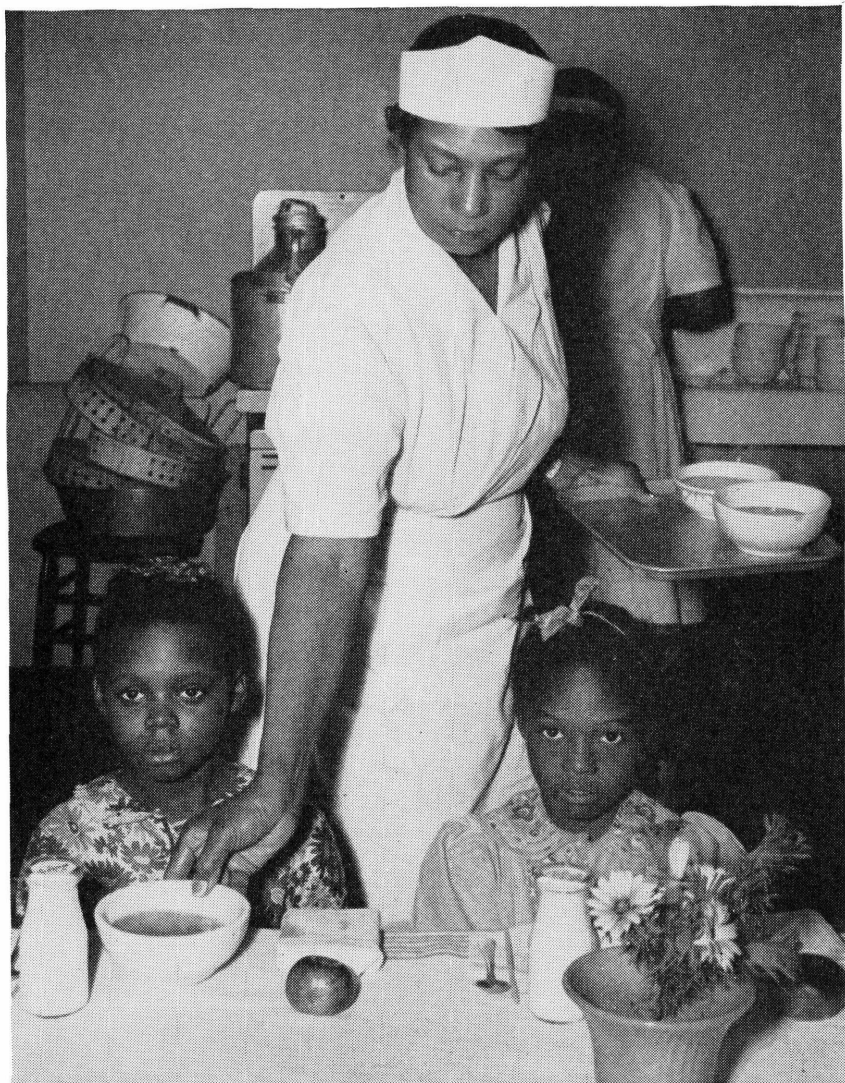


FIGURE 14.—Just 2 out of 20 who are being served milk, a hot dish, and an apple.

producers, milk dealers, the city welfare and school authorities, and the Federal Government. Thousands of people are watching it with keen interest, with a view to using it in other cities. Usually only schools in low-income localities are certified to receive the milk. The plan is modified, when necessary, to meet local conditions.

In a study of school lunches made by the Bureau of Home Economics it was found that greater use of milk and milk products was an outstanding need in most of the schools in which the lunches were analyzed. The milk programs eventually may take care of this lack in many large cities but in other places apparently it is up to the sponsors gradually to provide milk in some form if they wish their lunches to do their best preventive and protective work.

THE SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAM

Again it should be emphasized that school-lunch activities were widespread and successful before the Department of Agriculture offered to needy pupils some of the foods it was buying to relieve farmers. But thousands of these lunch programs have been improved and have been extended to more pupils by these foods, and tens of thousands of additional schools and communities have undertaken lunch work with the help of free food. This is especially true in rural areas where the work was not usual before. Many communities now actively going forward would not and probably could not have embarked on the enterprise without this aid from the Department.

Statistics make dry reading but they are necessary guides to how this work is progressing and how the Department of Agriculture has succeeded in its share of the three-fold aim mentioned earlier in this bulletin. Scattered statistics indicate roughly that, to date, about one-third of the children receiving foods from the Department come from families on relief, one-third from families dependent upon W. P. A., and another one-third from borderline families. All of the children have been certified as needing the food. Hundreds upon hundreds of W. P. A. and N. Y. A. people are engaged in the work. Millions of dollars worth of foods for which there was no adequate market have been used, and nearly 3 million farm children and 2 million city children have benefited.

So the figures confirm the benefits of the program to low-income farmers, unemployed workers, and undernourished children in country and city. Many believe that the economic and social advantages to the future citizens of the Nation are so great both to individuals and to the general welfare that the Department's share in the program may well be continued after the so-called farm surpluses have disappeared. Some visualize the ultimate goal as a nourishing noon meal at school for every child in the land.

THOSE WHO ARE INTERESTED in learning more about school lunches can apply to their State Governments, and they can get the following publications free of charge, as long as the supplies last, by writing to the United States Department of Agriculture.

EAT THE RIGHT FOOD TO KEEP YOU FIT. (By Bureau of Home Economics in cooperation with the Federal Children's Bureau; Office of Education; and Public Health Service.)

A blue-and-white folder tells briefly the foods we should try to include in our meals every day, and why.

SCHOOL LUNCHES AND THE COMMUNITY. (By Surplus Marketing Administration.)

A little "flier" describes what communities can do and what some are doing in getting surplus farm products into school lunches for needy children.

SCHOOL LUNCHES USING FARM SURPLUSES. Miscellaneous Publication 408. (By Surplus Marketing Administration and Bureau of Home Economics.)

How to get surplus foods—with menus for different kinds of lunches and schools, and with quantity recipes, planned for the use of directors of programs. *Distribution limited to schools that have lunch programs in operation.*

SUMMER LUNCHES FOR HUNGRY CHILDREN. (By Surplus Marketing Administration.)

A pocket-size publication tells why and how summer lunches are provided in some communities.

THE SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM AND AGRICULTURAL SURPLUS DISPOSAL. (By Bureau of Agricultural Economics.)

This comprehensive report on all phases of the school-lunch program of the United States Department of Agriculture includes consideration of how the work combines with local work, history of the movement, present situation, economics of this program, social value, public attitudes, and recommendations for the future of the program.

SCHOOL LUNCHES enlist the interest of literally dozens of agencies. It is impossible here to mention all the State and local officers and groups. In the Government alone, these and others are lending aid of one kind or another:

In the United States Department of Agriculture:

Bureau of Agricultural Economics
Bureau of Home Economics
Extension Service
Farm Security Administration
Rural Electrification Administration
Surplus Marketing Administration

In the Department of Labor:

Children's Bureau

In the Office of Education:

Home Economics Division

In the Public Health Service:

Child Hygiene Division

In the Federal Security Agency:

National Youth Administration

In the Work Projects Administration:

Community Service Division
School Lunch Project and Gardening and Can-
ning Project

**In the Office of Coordination of Health, Welfare, and
Related Defense Activities:**

Director of Nutrition

